

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 ACDA-12 CIAE-00 INR-07
IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-08 NRC-05 SOE-02
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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4622
USDOE HQ WASHDC
USDOE HQ GERMANTOWN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENNA 0077

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MNUC, IAEA, TECH, AU
SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE IN HANDLING NUCLEAR
SPENT FUEL

1. THE NOVEMBER VISIT TO VIENNA OF THE SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL
STUDY TEAM CONTRACTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND THE
DECEMBER VISIT OF CODEL SANTINI WERE USED BY AUSTRIAN
AUTHORITIES TO STRESS WITH THE VISITORS AND EMBASSY
OFFICERS REQUESTS OF THE USG RELATIVE TO DISPOSITION OF
U.S. ORIGIN NUCLEAR FUEL. THESE ARE:

A. THAT THE USG APPROVE AN AUSTRIAN REPROCESSING
ARRANGEMENT WITH THE FRENCH COGEMA FACILITY; AND

B. THAT THE USG ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS SOON FOR A U.S.-
AUSTRIAN AGREEMENT PROVIDING FOR THE STORAGE OF SPENT
NUCLEAR FUEL IN THE USA.

2. WITH RESPECT TO A., OUR FILES SHOW THAT IN MAY 1977
THE AUSTRIAN NUCLEAR POWER PLANT COMPANY (GKT) INFORMED
ERDA OF ITS INTENTION TO REPROCESS LOW ENRICHED (0.03
PERCENT) GKT SPENT FUEL OF U.S. ORIGIN AT COGEMA (AND
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POSSIBLY BNFL IN U.K.) AND REQUESTED ADVICE ON OBTAINING THE
NECESSARY U.S. APPROVAL TO TRANSFER. STATE 177249 INFORMED
US OF THE CORRECT PROCEDURE THE AUSTRIANS SHOULD FOLLOW
IN MAKING A FORMAL REQUEST FOR TRANSFER. WE FORWARDED THIS
INFORMATION TO THE APPROPRIATE AUSTRIAN AUTHORITY WHO TOLD
US THAT THE REQUEST WOULD BE PURSUED BY THE AUSTRIAN
EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. SINCE THEN (JULY 29) THE GOA HAS

HEARD NOTHING OF SUBSTANCE FROM THE USG AND IS MOST ANXIOUS TO HAVE OFFICIAL REACTION.

3. EVEN WITH U.S. AGREEMENT, REPROCESSING OF AUSTRIAN FUEL WOULD NOT NECESSARILY TAKE PLACE. A TENTATIVE AUSTRIAN-FRENCH COMMERCIAL CONTRACT FOR REPROCESSING AT COGEMA LEAVES OPEN THE QUESTION OF FINAL DISPOSITION OF PLUTONIUM AND WASTE, WHICH THE FRENCH WILL UNDERTAKE TO RETAIN FOR ONLY TEN YEARS AT COGEMA. ACCORDING TO GOA SPOKESMEN, NO AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT PERMISSION TO SHIP SPENT FUEL TO COGEMA WILL BE RECEIVED UNTIL A SATISFACTORY PROCEDURE IS FOUND FOR PERMANENT STORAGE OF SPENT FUEL.

4. THE AUSTRIANS ARE FULLY AWARE OF U.S. NON-PROLIFERATION POLICIES AND OUR RELATED OBJECTION TO REPROCESSING, AND ASSURE US THAT THEY ARE NOT ABOUT TO GET INTO NUCLEAR WEAPONS OR INTO DELIVERING WEAPONS GRADE MATERIAL TO NON-NUCLEAR POWERS. U.S. DELAY IN REPLYING TO THEIR REQUEST IS SEEN--NO DOUBT PARTLY AS AN ARGUING POINT--AS A LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE GOA. ASKED BY A CONGRESSMAN WHY THEY CONTINUED TO CONFORM TO U.S. RESTRICTIONS, THE AUSTRIANS STRESSED THAT THEY GET THEIR NUCLEAR FUEL ONLY FROM THE U.S. AND ARE FULFILLING STRICTLY THEIR LONG-TERM FORMAL AGREEMENT WITH THE U.S. RELATING TO U.S. ORIGIN SUPPLIES. THE ONLY ALTERNATE SUPPLIER FOR AUSTRIA WOULD BE THE USSR WHERE THEY HAVE NO INTENTION OF GOING.
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5. PLEASE ADVISE AS TO STATUS OF GOA REQUEST AND PROVIDE ANY APPROPRIATE DISCUSSION POINTS.

6. WITH RESPECT TO B., AUSTRIA'S FIRST AND, FOR THE TIME BEING, ONLY NUCLEAR POWER STATION COULD GO INTO OPERATION IN 1978. HOWEVER, IT HAS BECOME CLEAR ONLY RECENTLY THAT AUSTRIA HAS NO PLACE TO STORE NUCLEAR WASTE. DESPITE INTENSIVE GOA EFFORTS DOMESTIC OPPOSITION PRESENTLY PRECLUDES STORAGE WITHIN AUSTRIA, AND NO RELIABLE FACILITIES HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED ABROAD. AS MENTIONED, THE GOA HAS DIRECTED THEREFORE, THAT THE PLANT NOT GO INTO OPERATION UNTIL A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION TO THE STORAGE PROBLEM IS DEVELOPED. ONE RESULT OF THIS DECISION IS A COST OF AS 1-2 MILLION FOR EACH DAY THE PLANT DOES NOT OPERATE. A SECOND RESULT IS INCREASED DEMAND FOR IMPORTED FUEL.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENNA 0077

7. THE U.S. ANNOUNCEMENT IN OCTOBER THAT IT WAS PREPARED TO CONSIDER STORAGE OF LIMITED AMOUNTS OF FOREIGN SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL PRODUCED IMMEDIATE HIGH-LEVEL REACTION FROM THE AUSTRIANS. THE FOREIGN MINISTER RAISED THE MATTER WITH THE AMBASSADOR, AND AUSTRIA'S DELEGATE TO THE INFCE ORGANIZING CONFERENCE TOOK UP THE OFFER IN WASHINGTON. HE WAS TOLD THAT NO DETAILS HAD BEEN WORKED OUT CONCERNING PRACTICALITIES OF THE OFFER AND THAT THE WHOLE MATTER WAS BEING STUDIED. ALTHOUGH THE AUSTRIANS REALIZE THAT USEFUL DISCUSSIONS ABOUT STORING THEIR SPENT FUEL IN THE U.S. ARE FOR THE FUTURE AND NOT AT ALL CERTAIN TO PRODUCE THE RESULTS AUSTRIA WANTS, THEIR SPOKESMEN STRESSED THEIR INTEREST IN RECEIVING FROM APPROPRIATE U.S. AUTHORITIES A "DECLARATION OF INTENT" TO CONSIDER AUSTRIA'S CASE.

8. THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT OF THE IMMEDIACY AND URGENCY OF THE PROBLEM FACING AUSTRIA. THEIR NUCLEAR PLANT IS VIRTUALLY READY FOR OPERATION BUT CANNOT START BECAUSE OF THE POLITICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL UNCERTAINTIES SURROUNDING NUCLEAR FUEL AND WASTE STORAGE. NOR IS THEIR REASON TO DOUBT THAT AUSTRIA IS FULFILLING IN EVERY WAY ITS COMMITMENTS TO THE U.S. WITH RESPECT TO USE OF U.S. ORIGIN NUCLEAR FUEL.

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9. THE EMBASSY IS AWARE OF THE COMPLEXITIES INVOLVED AND OF THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUES AT STAKE. WE URGE THAT THE MERITS OF THE AUSTRIAN CASE BE CONSIDERED FULLY AND, ESPECIALLY, THAT THE GOA RECEIVE POSITIVE CONFIRMA-

TION SOON OF SUCH CONSIDERATION. IF ANY FOREIGN SPENT
FUEL IS TO BE STORED IN THE U.S., THE AUSTRIAN CASE SEEMS
GOOD. INDEED, THEY HAVE BEEN TOLD THEY ARE AT THE "HEAD
OF THE LINE" AND ARE GRATEFUL FOR THAT; BUT THEY NEED TO
KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT. BORG

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Message Attributes

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